

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. GEKAS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEKAS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

PROJECT VARELA, A HISTORIC STEP TOWARD DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN CUBA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to Project Varela, a historic step towards democratic reform in Cuba.

On Friday, May 10, over 11,000 citizens of Cuba took a courageous stand and petitioned the Cuban National Assembly to hold a nationwide referendum vote on guarantees of human rights and civil liberties.

Named for the nineteenth century priest and Cuban independence hero, Padre Felix Varela, the Varela Project received no funding or support from foreign organizations or foreign governments. This was a grassroots effort by the Cuban people to call on their government to provide them with internationally accepted standards of human and civil rights, including freedom of speech, the right to own a business, electoral reform and amnesty for political prisoners. This is the largest nonviolent challenge to Castro's decade-long, single-party control of the Cuban Government.

With its 11,000-plus signatures, the project qualifies under article 88 of the Cuban constitution, which states if the Cuban National Assembly receives the verified signatures of 10,000 legal voters, a referendum on the issue should be scheduled. Unfortunately, Cuban officials have given little hope for the project's success, stating that the national assembly is unlikely to agree to accept the petition and follow through with their constitutional obligation to hold a referendum vote.

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Mr. Speaker, the ultimate goal of U.S. policy towards Cuba has always been to promote the island's peaceful transition to democracy. Many of my colleagues have varying views on the best approach to achieve the democracy; however, we can all agree on the importance of a grass-roots democratic effort like Project Varela.

That is why I plan to introduce, Mr. Speaker, a resolution praising Project Varela and calling on the Cuban government to accept the petition and to hold the referendum. I urge all of my colleagues to join with me in commending the citizens of Cuba for actively exercising their constitutional rights and taking a stand for the rights of all Cubans.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FLAKE). Under a previous order of the

House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CARSON of Indiana addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

WORLD BANK PLANS MORE LOANS TO IRAN OVER U.S. OBJECTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. Mr. Speaker, where you sit now or stand now, the President of the United States told this Nation right after September 11 that there are those who are with us and those who are with the terrorists. I was not surprised to hear our President indicate that the government of Iran is on the side of the terrorists. Yes, it is true that there is a nominal, though impotent, figurehead reformist posing as President of Iran, but, of course, the real power is exercised by unelected officials who take the most extreme pro-terrorist views. So I was not surprised when our President used the term "axis of evil" and included the government of Iran, not the people of Iran who have given us one of the world's great civilizations, but the current unelected real power in the government of Iran.

I was not surprised today when the United States State Department identified the Iranian government as the number one sponsor of terrorism, but there was something that surprised me. I am surprised that we are about to finance those who finance terrorism. Yes, we do not have to comb the mountains of Afghanistan to find Mohammed Omar, because here in Washington down on K Street are those who are ready to finance those in the government of Iran who are the number one sponsors of terrorism.

This entity does not only enjoy the protection of the American government, but surprise further, they are about to receive over 800 million of our tax dollars this year, just as they did in prior years. I refer to the World Bank, an organization that does many worthy projects. Of course, Osama bin Laden built hospitals as well. Now they

are about to fund the number one sponsor of terrorism.

Let us reflect that money is fungible. The government in Tehran spends the minimum they have to on domestic affairs in order to secure their power. Whatever is left over goes for nuclear weapons development and to finance terrorism, and to help meet those domestic needs the World Bank financed by our taxpayers.

I want to skip a little ahead in my speech to make sure I identify this point. I am currently working on legislation, and I hope others will join me in drafting it, not as mere cosponsors, but as genuine coauthors, to say to the World Bank: Enough is enough. That if you make further loans to Iran, you will not be allowed to receive any additional monies from the United States and, perhaps further, that if you make additional loans to Iran, we will withdraw the capital that we have already invested. This is because weak protests, a mere vote and voice, virtually guarantees that the World Bank will send over \$700 million, \$755 million, to be more precise, over the next year to the government in Tehran.

Two years ago when the World Bank proposed a loan, we weakly voted against it. We told them we were against it. We voted all of our shares. It did not matter. And if this House is willing to settle for nothing more than a weak protest, then let us remember that when Iran develops nuclear weapons, they are not going to be smuggling them in to Paris or Rome; those nuclear weapons, scarcely the size of a human being, will be smuggled into Washington or New York or Los Angeles. And those European governments that stood with Tehran and demanded that they get funded will not be the immediate targets of Iranian nuclear terrorism. We will.

So perhaps we need to do more than weakly protest and get outvoted than have tea with the diplomats who are sending our money to Tehran.

Now, we will be told that the World Bank is 5 different entities and we are funding the right hand and the money to Tehran is coming out of the left hand. Let us not be fooled. There is one staff, there is one president, there is one group of directors making one group of decisions, and if we are going to send over \$800 million this fiscal year alone in this upcoming appropriations bill, not the supplemental, but the annual, if we are going to send that money to the very people who delight in the financing of the Tehran regime, and we can get outvoted as to how it is spent, a mere change in the bylaws, then even the right hand could send money to Tehran or to Khartoum in Sudan.

Mr. Speaker, let us hope that this Congress has the courage to upset the diplomats at their tea parties and say no money for the World Bank if that World Bank is financing the government in Iran.